**Water of Fleet District Salmon Fisheries Board**

**Chairman’s Report 2018**

**Overview**

The Water of Fleet will continue to be categorised as Category 3 for 2019. This means that exploitation is considered unsustainable therefore management actions required to reduce exploitation for 1 year i.e. mandatory catch and release (all methods).

Catch statistics (source: Marine Scotland) were:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |
| Salmon and grilse | 0 | 0 | 6 | 11 | 3 |
| Seatrout and finnock | 13 | 19 | 20 | 17 | 21 |

In 2018, the only fish caught were on the Rusko sections in 14 days of fishing. All except 4 seatrout were released in 2018. It is likely that the category 3 status, which means that salmon may not be kept, has led to a reduction in interest in fishing the river, so the statistics become self-fulfilling (no fishing, less fish caught, so difficult to raise the category status). Also, very low water in June and July and the October spates falling on Sundays may have contributed to lower salmon catches in 2018. (Note 2014 and 2015 some returns may have been missing).

It is noted that records of days effort will be required in addition to catch statistics for the current year onwards. This will allow us to gain a better view of the fishing pressure and success rates. Given the low level of fishing that is thought to take place, the catch statistics do not provide a reliable view of fish numbers.

Galloway Fisheries Trust have issued a report on their electro-fishing survey of the Fleet and its catchment areas, which can be downloaded from:

<http://www.nathonjoneswebdesign.co.uk/gft/water-of-fleet-district-salmon-fishery-board.php>

The summary findings were:

• Electrofishing surveys were conducted at 22 monitoring sites between 2016 and 2018 with eight sites surveyed over multiple years.

• Juvenile salmon were absent from the upper reaches of the Water of Fleet catchment and found in mixed densities lower down the catchment. The upper Water of Fleet has been affected by acidification and although some areas are showing signs of recovery, salmon populations remain fragile.

• The Water of Fleet historically supported a sea trout fishery. Healthy populations of juvenile trout are found with only the very upper reaches of the catchment not supporting juvenile trout. Trout are more tolerant to acidification than salmon and as such it is likely trout populations in the upper reaches are showing a degree of acid tolerance.

Peatland restoration work has been carried out on Cairnsmore of Fleet by SNH, but this is now on hold whilst results of the previous work are gathered and evaluated.

**Funding and accounts**

Please refer to the accounts. These will be published on the Water of Fleet section of the Galloway Fisheries Trust website.

**Retirement of Iain Jardine, clerk**

Iain Jardine has notified his intention to retire as clerk. The Board is extremely grateful to Iain for his hard work over many years in this role. Richard Durling has kindly offered to take on the role and will be proposed at the forthcoming Board meeting.

**Meetings**

A board meeting is scheduled for Friday 31 May 2019 at which the change of clerk will be proposed. An annual public meeting will be notified in due course.

**Complaints**

None

Richard Gilbey, Chairman

29 May 2019